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CYBER CELEBRATION: Kayla Ward, Logan Brock and Rachel Baker, from Northwestern High School's CyberTooth robotics team, celebrate their win while their coach, Ken Fillenworth, congratulates Kokomo High School's TechnoKats on their win. Both local robotics teams won the Queen City Regional at Xavier University Saturday. Both teams now go on to the nationals in St. Louis.
KT photo | Tim Bath

KHS and NHS robotics teams take crown

TechnoKats and CyberTooth advance to St. Louis

By Rob Burgess
Tribune night editor

Cincinnati — After the dust settled on Saturday at the Queen City Regional at Xavier University in Cincinnati, only three high school robotics teams could call themselves champions.

And two of them were from Kokomo.

Kokomo High School's TechnoKats, Northwestern High School's CyberTooth team and the Kinetic Knights of Kincardine District Secondary School in Kincardine, Ontario, Canada, joined forces to take the top honors.

"It was crazy," said Glenda Hernandez, 18, a senior at Kokomo High School and TechnoKat's business lead. "We improved a lot. We had high expectations."

Peyton Yeung, 18, a junior at Kokomo High School, is in his third year on the TechnoKats. He said collaborating with students from other countries was one of the perks of participation.

"It was really nice to be able to work with international teams," he said. "We shared a lot in common."

The trio bested 57 competitors from 12 states and three countries at the three-day competition, and in the process earned the right to compete at the For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology World Festival on April 25 through 28 in St. Louis.

“It’s going to be the best of the best, a lot of good competition,” said Mica Cain-Hoover, 18, a senior at Northwestern High School and member of CyberTooth. “We obviously earned our way there.”

Hernandez, who also served as alliance captain, said at the start of the competition rounds on Saturday afternoon, the top eight teams were allowed to choose two other teams to be part of their confederation.

“It was a one-time alliance,” she said. “This will never probably happen again.”

In turn, the eighth-seeded TechnoKats selected CyberTooth and the Kinetic Knights. The bottom-seeded alliance then went undefeated, by first eliminating the top seed, then defeating the fifth seed, and in the finals, defeating the third seed.

Andrew Davis, 16, a sophomore at Kokomo High School and a member of the TechnoKats, said this year’s game, “Rebound Rumble,” was similar to basketball. He said robots controlled by a four-person drive team shot small basketballs into four baskets arranged at three different heights.

Davis said teams earn additional points by balancing on a bridge at the end of the game.

“The endgame involved having our robots balance on a bridge similar to a teeter-totter,” he said. “We were the only alliance to put all three robots on and balance between 5 degrees of parallel.”

Even though this is the 21st season the TechnoKats have participated in FIRST, CyberTooth is still in their inaugural year.

As a result, CyberTooth also earned the prestigious Rookie All-Star Award on Saturday, which goes to a first year team who shows a strong partnership, implements the FIRST mission and inspires students to learn more about science and technology.

Also in her first year was Joy Dewing, an English teacher at Kokomo High School, who served as the drive coach for the TechnoKats.

“The best part about FIRST is that there is a place for everyone, and everyone’s part is important,” she said. “The drive team couldn’t have been successful without the hard work of the pit crew, and the information gathered by the scout team. I also like the fact that there are no individual superstars. It is truly a team sport.”

- Rob Burgess, Tribune night editor, may be reached by calling 765-854-8577 or via email at rob.burgess@kokomotribune.com.